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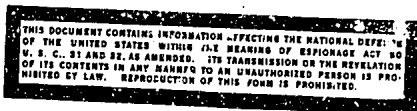
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CRITICISM OF HUNGARIAN LOCAL COUNCILS

In his speech at the conference of megye council presidents in the Ministry of the Interior, Arpad Hazi, Minister of the Interior, laid particular stress on the fact that, as shown by Soviet experience and by the experience of the councils, the prerequisites for the development of a link between the masses and the council are: (1) permanent committees; (2) council meetings; (3) reports by council members, and (4) personal consultation by council members.

Comrade Hazi said the following about council meetings:

Well-organized council meetings can promote our work greatly. It is here, first of all, that the members of the council must become active. All members of the council must attend the meetings and must induce the population to take part in them so as to get first-hand experience and watch and control the work of the council.

The good example of the council members is of decisive importance in the activities of our councils, for if the masses see that the council members justify their confidence, they will take a more active part in government work in ever-increasing numbers.

To make the council members and the broad masses of the population active, the executive committee must awaken their interest in the work of government.

Those questions must be discussed at the council meetings which concern the population directly and in which the population is interested. The broad masses of the population can be drawn into the discussion of these problems, and many aims of common interest can be realized by social work. The schools can be redecorated, and we can mobilize for road repair work, tree planting, beautifying our towns and villages, etc. If the broad masses of the population work for the realization of such aims, they will adopt them more readily.

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If the councils really deal with the problems which interest the broadest masses of the population, it can achieve very good results. In Bucuta, Zala Megye, the population endorsed the building of a social center with so much enthusiasm that this work was done almost entirely by community effort. As a result of this excellent mass mobilization, the social center was such a success that Comrade Revai consented to have it named after him.

The council meeting took the initiative in road repair work in many villages, as for instance at Valko, where the council members pointed out that the road leading to the threshing floor was impassable and stated that it must be repaired before the beginning of the harvest.

This and similar motions created such an atmosphere that the council members and guests felt the council existed for their benefit and that it was their duty to take part in the accomplishment of these tasks.

All this shows that there is enormous force and initiative in the masses. The executive committee must develop this initiative in the masses, guide the work toward its realization, and create an atmosphere in which everybody feels that it is his duty to take part in the work of beautifying his village, and that it is a shame to be left out of it. In this way, it will become clear to the workers that the council regards it as its task to solve all the problems in the village.

Our councils are not yet working along these lines. They have no local policy, no plans for furthering the execution of big national plans; they do not even have plans for putting their towns in order, planting trees, or repairing the roads. As a result, our towns are disorderly and unclean, there are many unrepaired roads which could be repaired by private initiative, etc. The reason for all these things is that we have not yet shown our councils how to perform this work.

A recent resolution of the Council of Ministers promotes private initiative by making materials available. The comrades must count earnestly on this help which will provide for the comfort and well-being of the population. If such questions are discussed at the council meeting, the presence of the council members and of a numerous audience is assured, and, above all, the whole population of the town will follow the proceedings of the council meeting attentively.

The council meetings must become an educational institution for the council members, for it is here that they come in touch with government work for the first time and are entrusted with tasks which make them active participants in government work.

All this requires careful planning of the council meetings; the reports must be compiled with great circumspection so that the resulting debate will promote the solution of the question on the agenda and mobilize the whole community for the realization of the resolutions.

The council meeting can fulfill its task only if it is able to exercise criticism. We must energetically fight any tendencies to transform the council members into mere representative or municipal figures.

The development of the connection between the council and the masses is of decisive importance, as I said in my introduction. Despite my warning, the comrades are slow in realizing that the council cannot fulfill its task satisfactorily without this link with the masses. Where this is not achieved, where the council does not become a mass organization, no real work is done, and the results, if any, are deceiving, for then the education of the working masses is neglected even when the administration is efficient.

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I could cite numerous examples to prove that in such cases, the working masses are not taught to love their party, government, and country, or to make a sacrifice. They even remain opposed to our party and the people's government. Such errors and deficiencies are systematically exploited by the enemy. A serious hostile act committed at Veresegyhaza, Pest Megye, illustrates my point. Arpad Titel, a bailiff and a former student of theology, and Jeno Fenyvesi, a former officer in Horthy's army, appeared at the house of Janos Lengyel, a working peasant with a holding of $4\frac{1}{2}$ holds, with a statement that he owed 60 forints in back taxes. Lengyel showed proof that he had overpaid his taxes by 113 forints. But Titel, trying to deprive Lengyel of his pig, imposed a fine of 2,000 forints for the improper handling of the dunghill and 1,000 forints for improper fire precautions. As Lengyel could not pay the 3,000 forints immediately, they carried off his only pig. I ask you, comrades, did these scoundrels act in the interest of the fulfillment of the plan? No, these hostile elements abused their power. They wanted to antagonize the working peasants against our great party and nation.

In some cases, the careless measures of higher organs force subordinate councils to take unjust measures to execute the orders received. To give only one of many examples the following is cited: the town of Jozsa was assessed 30 pigs, despite the fact that every inhabitant had fulfilled his obligations toward the state. The municipal council, complying with the order, sent for the peasants and forced them to turn over the pigs. The working peasants, in groups of four or five, purchased one pig each, bringing the total to 28 instead of the 30 called for. But you can imagine, comrades, what grave damage this can cause to our popular democracy.

Such acts, even if they are not the result of deliberate destructive work on the part of the enemy, cause grave damage, help the enemy, make a mockery of the peasant policy of our party, and undermine the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Besides excesses toward the left, there are still opportunist inclinations toward the right. Instructive examples are the towns of Olbo and Narda in Vas Megye, which lagged behind in poultry deliveries. Instead of enforcing the law against those who had failed to fulfill their obligations toward the state, a begging campaign was started to fulfill the plan. In this way, an attempt was made to protect those who had not fulfilled their obligations toward the state at the expense of those who had.

What causes these deviations? First, we still fail in vigilance toward the hostile elements lurking in the councils. Second, we still place insufficient stress on training those workers in the movement who are honest and willing to help but lack sufficient training for the task. These errors and shortcomings cause immense damage, as you can see from the examples. I call attention to the fact that no council official is permitted to violate the socialist law. The decrees of our government enable everybody to accomplish every task in time and thus strengthen the foundations of our government, the coalition of workers and peasants. Therefore, it is the duty of the councils to do their utmost to put in effect the instructions and decrees, for this will guarantee the success of the work.

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